

Random Encounters

All Adrift on the Dune Sea

By Skip Williams



Not Exactly a Thorn in His Paw

The androsphinx Calibmennon has become alarmed by the plague of monstrous scorpions in the Dune Sea. He has spent the past several days trying to locate and eliminate their nests. Earlier today, Calibmennon found a Colossal monstrous scorpion, and perhaps it's the one that spawned the entire current plague of scorpions now swarming over the Dune Sea. Calibmennon tried to defeat the scorpion from a distance using his spells, but they proved insufficient for the job. The androsphinx had better luck with flyby attacks, but the scorpion grabbed him and stung him several times before finally succumbing to Calibmennon's claws. Calibmennon has been stung three times. Thanks to a *delay poison* spell, Calibmennon hasn't yet attempted any saving throws against the venom, but once the spell wears off, he'll have to make three Fortitude saves at DC 23. The poison could kill him outright by reducing his Constitution score to 0 or less, but even one failed save could kill him thanks to his current, low hit point total.



The PCs find Calibmennon near the body of his foe. After defeating the scorpion, Calibmennon circled the body in ever expanding rings. He was trying to discover the den or nest from which it came. He has not been successful, so he has returned to the site of the battle and crouched down next to the body to take a breather. Thanks to the dunes, the PC can't see Calibmennon and his kill from very far away, but the vultures circling overhead can be seen from a great distance.

When the PCs arrive on the scene, Calibmennon does his best to remain calm and polite, but he'll eventually get around to asking the PCs for a *neutralize poison* spell or, failing that, treatment from a character with the Heal skill. A single *neutralize poison* spell will fix up Calibmennon. To treat the three stings with the Heal skill, a character would have to make six checks (once for the initial save for each sting, and once more for each secondary save). The DC for success is 23; if the PC is treating the poison, it's possible that Calibmennon will make a successful saving throw anyway (see the Heal skill description in the *Player's Handbook*).

Calibmennon has used most of his spells today, but not his roar (he knows his roaring has little effect on mindless vermin). Should the PCs attack (or even threaten to attack), Calibmennon looses a roar and goes down fighting. He's not quite himself right now, and he figures he has little to lose. If the PCs press the issue, he agrees to pay for treatment and offers 3,000 gp and a potion (DM's choice) for a cure. He doesn't have the cash or the potion with him (he has them stashed in his lair). If the PCs fail to treat Calibmennon, they won't get paid. If they succeed, however, Calibmennon agrees to bring the payment right back here in three days time. The sphinx is in no mood to negotiate, and if the PCs want payment, they'll have to take the deal. Calibmennon won't break his word, though he's not happy about having to pay.

Should the PCs offer to help Calibmennon without demanding any payment, the androsphinx promises to do them a favor someday. He reveals the location of his lair and tells them to drop by if they need anything.

Should the PCs kill Calibmennon, or just let him die, they'll meet a pair of gnosphinxes later in the day. The two ladies have been scouring the desert seeking Calibmennon. They are very unhappy to find him dead, and they want to question the PCs at length to find out if they know anything about his death. The gnosphinxes have a pretty decent chance of detecting any evasions or lies the PCs tell them, thanks to their Sense Motive scores. Should the gnosphinxes conclude the PCs had anything to do the Calibmennon's death, they pretend to be satisfied, but they actually withdraw to a safe distance and use their *symbol* abilities. Each wears a medallion that can bear a symbol. One sphinx places a *symbol of death* on her medallion, and the other uses a *symbol of pain*. They both set their symbols to be triggered when viewed, and they attune the symbols to each other, so that they both are immune to each symbol's effects (see the *symbol* spell description in the *Player's Handbook*). Then they return to attack the PCs. They first swoop low to trigger their symbols. Then they move in for melee attacks. They flee if reduced to 20 hit points or less.

If the PCs helped Calibmennon, they still meet the gnosphinxes, but they're in a much better mood and are mainly interested in learning Calibmennon's whereabouts, which the PCs can provide if the

androsphinx gave them the location of his lair. Should the PCs do so, the gynosphinxes warn them that there is a flock of hieracosphinxes hunting in the area.

Calibmennon (androsphinx): hp 114 (currently 28). Use the stats from page 232 in the *Monster Manual*, except that Calibmennon has only the following spells remaining:

Cleric Spells remaining (save DC 13 + spell level): 0 -- *guidance, light*; 1st -- *protection from evil**; 2nd -- *shield other**; 3rd -- none.

*Domain spell.

Gynosphinxes (2): hp 52 each (see *Monster Manual* page 233).

Bringing the Parts Together

If the PCs mention that they defeated the monstrous scorpions from "A Plague of Scorpions," Calibmennon would like to hear the details. In any case, he urges the PCs to leave the area quickly since it is literally crawling with monstrous scorpions. During his flights across the countryside, he has seen a set of newly uncovered ruins (detailed in "Mummies by Moonlight") and an encampment of nomads (detailed in "A Taste of Desert Hospitality"). If he is on good terms the party, he relates what he knows about these two encounters, which isn't very much.

Calibmennon knows that the ruins have been uncovered for only a few days, and they likely will be covered up again soon. He doesn't know what the ruins contain, but he suspects that it has served as a bandit hideout from time to time, which means there may be some treasure hidden there.

Calibmennon tells the PCs that the nomads are friendly, but a bit of an oddity in these parts. Calibmennon spoke to them briefly, and they told him they were crossing the Dune Sea in search of better grazing for their goats. Calibmennon hopes they have a quick passage across the Dune Sea, because there certainly aren't any good grazing areas to be found anywhere within the Dune Sea.

Coming in Part 3 of All Adrift on the Dune Sea

With the shifting of the sands, a set of ruins bakes under the sun. What will the PCs find there?

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